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SUBJECT: Iraqi Kurdistan Region Media Summary --
February 13, 2007

11. (U) This is a Regional Reconstruction Team (RRT) cable.

Kurdistan Regional Government Strongly Condemns U. S. Air Strike in
Mosul

12. (U) The office of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) President Massoud Barzani issued a statement condemning the killing of Peshmerga soldiers during a U. S. air strike in Mosul last Thursday. The statement says "We strongly condemn this ugly operation, especially because recently these attacks have been happening repeatedly and without any justification." The statement added, "Kurdish citizens ask the commanders of American troops to investigate this operation, announce the result of the investigation, punish those who were responsible, and to know the real motives behind the attacks." The statement also warns that there will be "painful consequences" if these attacks continue. The statement was issued via the Kurdish Peyamner News Agency but has not been carried in any local newspapers.

Continuing Coverage of Palestinian Representative's Visit to Iraqi
Kurdistan

13. (U) Major Kurdish newspapers reported on the second day of a visit by the Palestinian Authority President's Special Representative, Jibreel Rajooob, to Iraqi Kurdistan. Yesterday Rajooob met with Kurdistan National Assembly Speaker Adnan Mufti at the KNA building to discuss the strong historical ties between the Kurds and Palestine. Mufti described the Palestinian visit as a reinforcement of that relationship and Rajooob expressed his readiness to sustain the relationship. Mufti, in turn, expressed the Kurdistan Regional Government's support of the Mecca Agreement between Fateh and Hamas, describing it as a positive initiative towards a stable and peaceful Palestine.

14. (U) Newspapers also wrote about Rajooob's refusal to stand in front of the Kurdistan flag at a press conference following his meeting with KRG President Massoud Barzani on Sunday. According to Awene independent newspaper, Rajooob and Barzani agreed to move both the Palestinian and the Kurdish flags away from camera view. However, in a clarification letter published in the PUK-publication Kurdistani Nwe, the political bureau of the KDP discredited this saying, "No flags were originally intended to be put behind speakers at the press conference."

15. (U) The same article in Kurdistani Nwe provides further coverage of the press conference. Fadhil Mirani, Secretary of the Kurdistan Democratic Party's Political Bureau, Fadhil Mirani, said in the press conference that the KRG has not agreed to shelter Palestinian refugees. "Fateh will open its office in Kurdistan," he said. "But the office is going to represent Fateh as a party and will not represent the Palestinian Authority."

Anniversary of PKK Leader's Arrest Sparks Protests for His Release

¶16. (U) On the eighth anniversary of the arrest of PKK President Abdulla Aujalan, Awene independent newspaper reports on scheduled protests organized by the "Aujalan Protection Committee" calling for his release. On Thursday protesters will march on the Kurdistan National Assembly building in Erbil and deliver a petition to the parliament. A similar protest will take place in Sulaimaniyah on Saturday. A number of elderly women at the Makhmour refugee camp have also gone on strike for three days to mark the anniversary.

Forty-Five Kurdish Asylum Seekers Deported to Erbil

¶17. (U) Knewsdaily.net exclusive
The Kurdish-language website Knewsdaily.net published an exclusive telephone interview with a Kurdish asylum seeker who was deported from the U. K. along with 44 others. The group arrived to Erbil International Airport last night on a British military aircraft. "We were handcuffed and not allowed to get off the plane until late at night," the asylum seeker said. Knewsdaily.net also contacted the President of the Iraqi Asylum-Seekers Federation in the U. K., Dashti Jamal. Jamal said that his group had lost contact with relevant U. K. officials by the time the asylum seekers were on the plane to Erbil and could do nothing to stop the deportation.

KNA Speaker: Turkmen Will Be Second Ethnicity in Kirkuk

¶18. (U) Major media reported on a meeting between KNA speaker Adnan al-Mufti and a delegation from the International Republican Institute (IRI) in Erbil today. In the meeting Mufti commented, "As soon as Kirkuk is back in the green line, Turkmen will represent the

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second largest ethnicity in Kirkuk after the Kurds." He also said that the Kurdish leadership supports their Turkmen brothers wherever they represent majority in terms of population. He continued that they have every right to take the rank of governor, mayor, or any other administrative position.

Commentaries:

¶19. (U) Awene independent newspaper ran an article by Jaza Muhammed that talks about the hopelessness of some residents and officials concerning the possible return of Kurdish-majority towns around Diyala Province to the Kurdistan Region territories. He summarizes the views of two local officials. While the head of Article 140 Office in Khanaqeen is optimistic that the Article 140 Committee's decisions will be implemented peacefully, the Mayor of Qaratapah district anticipates a disparity in the execution of the plan. He said there is lack of knowledge about how the plan is to be implemented and no visible action to execute the Article 140 Committee's decisions at the local level. (Note: Article 140 Committee resolutions are scheduled to begin implementation starting on March 15.)

¶10. (SBU) This media summary is completed by Press and Cultural Specialist Hama Othman.